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HISTORICAL ACCOUNT
OF THE
TOWN AND PARISH
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NANTWICH; K

With a particular Relation

O F T H E

REMARKABLE SIEGE it Sustained,

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The GRAND REBELLION, in 1643.

SHREWSBURY:

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY

OF THE

TOWN AND PARISH

NANTWICH

With a particular Relation

to the



The Corporation, in 1643

By Authority of the

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE,
of the Town and Parish, of
NANTWICH, &c.

THE origin of ancient places is not always to be ascertained with that precision which might be wished; and tho' we cannot speak with any certainty of the foundation of *Nantwich*, yet it is generally allowed by skilful antiquarians, to bear many marks of venerable antiquity. Indeed if we may credit an old tradition, this town was not unknown to the *Romans*, having paid tribute or custom to them for it's salt; springs of which are very numerous here. But tho' we do not pretend to build with any certainty upon the authority or fidelity of this tradition; there is nothing improbable in it; on the contrary some considerations countenance, if not confirm it, namely such as follow: The famous *twentieth Legion* stiled *Victrix* which was raised by *Augustus Caesar*, and by the command of the Emperor *Claudius* transported into *Britain* under

der the conduct of *Aulus Plautius Anno Xti. 43*, garrisoned *Chester*, according to the well founded conjectures of some learned men, in the year when *Cæsonius Petus* and *Petronius Turpilianus* were Consuls under the reign of *Nero*, about the year of *Xt. 63*, at the time when *Suetonius Paulinus* attempted the conquest of *Anglesey*. That the *Romans* had a station also in this country is indisputable, which they named *Condatum*, generally supposed to be at or near *Congleton*; yet, from the late learned researches of the *Rev. Mr. Whitaker*, author of the history of *Manchester*, I apprehend the point to be more accurately determined by fixing its proximity much nearer to *Nantwich*, that is to say, at *Kinderton*. If we further reflect that their other considerable station at *Mancunium* (*Manchester*) was at no inconvenient distance; and add to all this, that the salt works of *Nantwich* were confessedly more numerous, and ancient in those times, than any in *Cheshire* or the parts adjacent; and that the article it self was so necessary, and useful, for their immediate purposes; and so beneficial to them from its facility in raising an impost, which so knowing a people could scarcely overlook or neglect; taking the whole into consideration we can scarce doubt of there having been an intercourse betwixt the *Romans* and the town of *Nantwich*, and that it is highly probable that the tradition is well founded. Be this as it may, *Nantwich* was
a place

a place of some note before the erection of its church, at which time the inhabitants resorted to the older church of *Acton*, (one mile from hence) to worship God, which hath given occasion to many to suppose our's a chapel annex to *Acton*, and the Abbot and Monks of *Combermere Abbey* to assert their right to it as such, without any well-grounded claim, as will be shewn hereafter in the course of this work. There are some who rejecting the dubious accounts of *Geofrey of Monmouth*, *Higden*, and *Henry Bradshaw*, (authors it must be confessed who dealt too much in the marvellous, and who had asserted the foundation of *Chester* to be much older than the coming of the *Romans* into *Britain*) depend upon the more respectable authorities of *Leland* and *Seldan* and suppose that city to be founded by the *Romans*. If this be the case, it may not be unreasonable from what hath been said before, to suppose that *Nantwich* was founded by the same people, at, or near the same time; there is nothing unreasonable I say in the supposition, and it is all we have to guide us, for whenever authentic records are wanting to ascertain the truth of facts and to identify persons and places, (especially of ancient times) all we can proceed upon, are the most reasonable and probable conjectures, aided and strengthened by the best collected circumstances; for in such a case to assume the language of truth and certainty would only serve to display a culpable

presumption and unpardonable temerity. Yet after all; there are not wanting those, who suppose (and with some shew of probability) that *Chester* from its advantageous situation, and from the utility and benefit naturally accruing to *Nantwich* from its numerous salt springs, might have been places of some account before the entrance of the *Romans* into *Britain*; and that both places were much enlarged and improved by that people.

Nantwich, *Namptwyche* or *Wich-Malbank* (though the first seems to be the original name being expressive of it's situation; *Nant* in the *British* language signifying a vale) gives name to the whole hundred: is situated upon the river *Wever*, and upon the borders of *Staffordshire* and *Shropshire* on the direct post road from *Holy-Head* in *Wales* by way of *Chester* to *London*, from which last city it is distant 162 miles *N. W.* It lies in a fertile vale having some of the richest cheese-land around it in the whole country: at several dairies near, are made the finest that can be met with; some of which are so large as to weigh 120, 130 or even 140 pounds; and here the most considerable cheese contracts are made to the annual amount it is said of 100000*l.* This town is the largest in the county, *Chester* excepted, being almost one mile in length from *E.* to *W.* and approaches near to three quarters of a mile from *N.* to *S.* containing many
large

large and spacious streets, and about 600 houses, hath a good weekly market on *Saturday* and three annual fairs, viz. *March 26th*, *September 4th*, commonly called old or great fair; and *December 4th*, besides a market, every *Saturday* fortnight for the sale of neat-cattle, which opens on the *Saturday* next after *Candlemas-day* and continues all the spring and the beginning of the summer.

Nantwich, or *Wich-Malbank* (so called from *William de Malbeng* or *Malbank* to whom it was given by his kinsman *Hugh Lupus* the first *Norman Earl of Chester*) now confers the title of Baron upon *George James Viscount Malpas* and *Earl of Cholmondeley* who is the Lord of the manor, and hath a hundred court held under him in which presides a Barrister at law. He holds a Court Baron also and hath the power of attaching body and goods for the recovery of debts, betwixt the respective sums of forty shillings and ten pounds; the privilege of a jail, and appointing the keeper, who is generally the bailiff belonging to the court. This Lord hath toll of cattle, roots and fruit, and the mills erected upon the river *Wever* belong to him. The toll of corn and fish belong to *John Crewe* of *Crewe Esq.* who appoints the bellman. This gentleman is also patron of the church.

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The principal streets in this town are the High-Town, or High-Street; the Hospital-Street; the Pillory-Street; Pepper-Street; Beam-Street; Barker-Street; Milln-Street; and the Welch-Row. Which last is parted from the rest of the Town by the river *Wever*, over which is a good stone bridge, of one arch. The streets and lanes of lesser account are Love-Lane (or the Oat Market), Swine-Market, Wall-Lane, Church-Lane, Castle-Lane, the Water-Load, Dog-Lane, Love-Lane (or Mason's-Yard) the two Wood-Streets, Bakehouse-Lane, Marsh-Lane, Fulhurst (or Lion-Lane, Sparbacon-Lane, Middle-Stylh, and a small lane or passage formerly called Pepper-Street, near the bridge leading out of the Welch-Row to the river.

The street called the Welch-Row (sometimes St. Annes from a chapel of that name which formerly stood at the lower end of it, tho' no record mentions it by that name,) was heretofore known by the name of Frog-Row, as appears by sundry deeds in the reign of *Richard II.* *Henry IV.* *Henry V.* *Henry VI.* and *Edward IV.* till the reign of *Henry VII.* not called the Welch-Row in any deed, or evidence, but in his and his sons reign it was indifferently called, the Welch-Row, and Frog-Row other deeds make mention of the Frog-Channel and Frog-Well in the said street where *Sir Ralph Arden*

Arden knight, lord of *Dorfold* who died the 8th, of *Henry V.* as appears by an inquisition taken after his death, had a Milln called Frog-Milln, and the water coming thence in its passage to the town, imparts it's name to certain pastures called the Frog-Greaves and passing along the said street without doubt, gave it the name of the Frog-Row—Upon what occasion it came to be called the Welch-Row is not apparent, certain it is, that the commerce and negotiation betwixt this town and the inhabitants of North-Wales upon the account of bringing lime and other commodities hither, and taking salt hence, was much more frequent, than of later times.

Since our salt was brought to the doors by those that carry it weekly to *Shrewsbury*, and as the *Welch* that traded hither lodged in the same street, it might possibly take the name of the *Welch-Row* upon that occasion: but I rather think it was a *Name of Reproach* which was given it by reason of the depredations and combustions made by those people under *Owen Glendower* in the reign of *Henry IV.* at which time the townsmen stood upon their defence having the river for a trench betwixt them and the *Welch*. For admitting the truth of what is related, ~~that~~^{of} an ancestor of the ancient family of the *Maisterfons*, the street might be called the *Welch-Row*, by way of obliquy. One
Mr.

*Mr. THOMAS MAISTERSON who had a command in France under the BLACK PRINCE, and afterwards served King HENRY IV. and King HENRY V. defended his house in Pillory-Street, which was then moated about, against those inhabitants who had joined the Welch on the other side of the river. This must have been in those Welch commotions, and seems to strengthen this conjecture. And it appears by the many invective laws which in the reign of Henry IV. and V. were enacted against the Welch, what contumely they lay under till these laws were repealed: A remarkable instance of which appears by this; In those days a man thought himself scandalized, and preferred a complaint against another, for calling him a Welchman: the complainant justified himself by shewing his extraction was *English* — not *Welch*. And to manifest that a long continued enmity hath subsisted between the Welch-Row and the other part of the town, the youth of both have in the days of our fore-father's frequently met at the bridge which parts the town, there to bicker and encounter with each other, and that party which first quitted the bridge was deemed to be vanquished, and in their disports of dancing, wrestling, playing at prison-bars and the like; the contest hath generally been betwixt the Town and the Welch-Row. And something of this spirit of emulation prevails to this day*

day. Yet principally we refer to the time of *Henry IV.* for it's being called the *Welch-Row*, as we find it not so named in any deed or authentic record till the reign of *Henry VII.* The reason is obvious, because it's being a bye, or nick-name was not owned by the inhabitants of the said street, till the coming in of that Prince, who was a *Welchman* by birth as well as blood; and got the crown from *Richard* the usurper by the arms and assistance of his countrymen, under the command of Sir *William Stanley* of *Holt Castle* and Sir *Rice ap Thomas*, which brought the *Welchmen* into grace again; so that henceforward, it was deemed no disparagement to place or person to be called *Welch*.

This street was formerly accommodated with a small chapel, dedicated to St. *Anne*, for the use of the inhabitants, situated at the lower end of the street near the bridge; from whence this street was sometimes denominated St. *Anne's* and St. *Anne's* parish; but no vestiges of such a building have been to be found for a great number of years. It must have been of the greatest convenience to the inhabitants of the *Welch-Row*, because formerly there was no bridge over the river, and they commonly forded over from this street to the high town, which in case of floods which frequently happen, would

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have prevented their attendance on public worship at the other church, this was afterwards remedied by the erection of a wooden bridge which was in being in the reign of King *James* I. if not later. When the present bridge of stone was erected I am not informed. A public clock also called *St. Anne's*, which continued till a few years ago was fixed up on a dwelling in the middle of this street, which, by a recent alteration in the buildings there, hath been taken away. This clock was probably erected at the expence of the worthy family of the *Wilbraham's* of *Town's End*, the bell being inscribed with their name. On a house in this street near the bridge was also a bell placed for the purpose of alarming the town in case of fire, and this too upon some account has been taken down but a few years since, which is much to be regretted, because from the numerous timber buildings with thatched roofs here, that destructive element, fire, might in a little space of time make dreadful ravages, as this town formerly hath most fatally experienced. The speedy assistance of people collected to quell the progress of fires often prevents great losses and destruction, which would otherwise ensue, and there are none more bold and alert in such cases than the common people of *Nantwich*. It is much to be wished therefore, that the fire-bell,

as it was called, were replaced in it's old situation. At the end of this street leading to *Chester*, the *Abbot* and *Monks* of the *Abby* of *Combermere*, who were of the order of *St. Benedict* erected a priory, but no marks or footsteps thereof have remained for perhaps some centuries past, but the arms said to belong thereto, are noticed by *King* in his *Vale Royal*, which are *Party per Pale, Azure and Gules*, two crutches in *Saltier Or.* There was likewise an Hospital or Lazar House, called *St. Laurences's* Hospital, termed in several deeds, *Domus Leproserum*, near the Priory, (if it was distinct from it, for some suppose them both the same) and the arms seem to countenance that opinion, nevertheless, I apprehend they are mistaken, for to me the existence of both erections seem indisputable. A Priory and Lazar House are different things; the existence of the latter is fully proved by several deeds yet extant, and what is called the *Prior's Obiit*, is collected by the Parish Officers to this day, it is generally agreed that they (if distinct edifices) were situated over against the Alms Houses, founded and endowed by the very worthy and ancient family of *Wilbraham*. There is an ancient tradition which holds that the Priory was built upon the scite, upon a part of which, now stands the Malt House occupied by Mr. *James Bayley*, very near the said Alms Houses, now this is almost oppo-

site the other situation, and if this tradition could be depended upon would be a further proof that the Priory and Lazar House could not be one, but distinct edifices; in all probability the Hospital or Lazar House, might be under the inspection of the Prior and his Monks.

But to speak more particularly of the town. It hath been matter of surprise to many, that a place so considerable and ancient hath never been incorporated by law, in the manner of many others of less note and antiquity, but this may be accounted for by the separate jurisdictions and fees into which it hath been split and divided, and the entire government of it never long vested in any single Lord, notwithstanding which, it had formerly a voluntary incorporation, called a *Guild*, which is a confraternity or brotherhood, for the better managing and governing the matters belonging to the town, and for the good of the whole, and these guilds or brotherhoods were generally composed of the richest and most considerable part of the inhabitants wherever they were formed, and upheld by a mutual contribution; some privileges were annexed to them, and they had a common-hall; *that* occupied by the *Nantwich* guild was, what is now the Grammar-School in the Church-Yard. Persons who were not incorporated in any of the respective confraternities

confraternities (for, it appears, there were several of them at *Nantwich*) were not allowed; (they, nor their children) to have at their decease, or their bringing home, any of the ornaments of the church (a custom here in use in those days) nor, any more of the bells to be rung for them than the third bell.

It may not be unnecessary, perhaps, to note here how the rule of the town came to be so parcelled out into several jurisdictions, known here by the name of liberties.

Hugh Malbanc succeeded *William* his Father in the Barony of *Wich Malbanc*, or *Nantwich*, which *Hugh*, by his charter dated 1133, gave a fourth part of *Wickty* (*Nantwich*) to the *Abby* of *Combermere*, with all its jurisdictions, &c. The residue after the death of *William* son of the said *Hugh* came to be parted among his three daughters and heirs, the whole by estimation, (the *Abbat's* part excepted) was eighteen Knights fees, which appears from hence, that the two daughters of Lord *Bassett* of *Hedington*, who married the eldest daughter of the last Baron of *Nantwich*, had three fees a piece, so that six fees made one third part; this, in process of time, came to be divided among so many copartners, that some had but a thirty-sixth part. The other fees, parcel of the Barony, were anciently

ciently known by the names of the Countess's fee, Audley's-fee, the Abbot's-fee, and the fee of *St. John of Jerusalem*, which Knights had several privileges and possessions also in the adjacent parts of *Staffordshire*; this, formerly belonged to the famous *John of Gaunt*, or *Ghent*, Duke of *Lancaster*: but now belongs to the family of *Booth of Mottram*, in this county. The rest now respectively, to the Earl of *Cholmondeley*, the Hon. Mr. *Tollemache*, and *John Crewe*, Esq. of *Crewe*. 'Tis true something more than a century ago, many of the scattered parts were united in the possession of Sir *Robert Cholmondeley*, notwithstanding which, they had been under the government of Sir *Thomas Fulburs* of *Crewe*, in the reign of *Henry VIII.* and in the reign of *Queen Elizabeth*, Sir *Christopher Hatton* had the chief government, which in some measure accounts for so many separate jurisdictions which at this day subsist in this town. While the Barony was entire, it was under the immediate jurisdiction of the Baron, or his Steward for the time being, and while the town was, as it were, incorporated under one head, and had a court baron and court leet to punish disorders; in all probability the government was more regular than when it came to be divided among many Lords, whose separate jurisdictions and divided interests was that which hindered the introduction of one uniform

uniform government, else, no doubt, the town might have been incorporated with as ample privileges as other less principal ones of the county are at this day. Howbeit, to manifest their love to unity and good order, the better sort of the inhabitants heretofore, associated themselves in guilds or brotherhoods (as mentioned before) which were upheld by a mutual contribution among themselves. These guilds were *regulated* by the court leet in matters, which they (being no corporation by law) had no power to redress, and continued to the reign of *Edward VI.* and then came to be suppressed and the revenues thereto belonging given to the crown by the *stat. of Edward VI.* When *Sir Thomas Fulshurst* of *Crewe*, was steward or governor of this town, and presided over the guild, he with a proper jury in the 30th of *Henry VIII.* set forth divers regulations for the better ordering and governing the brotherhood and the rest of the inhabitants, which were found to be of such utility and concernment as to be generally observed at this time, though some have been abrogated. From the contribution of the brotherhood, the maintenance of six perpetual priests to say mass for the brethren and sisters of the guild, was particularly provided, as appears by a deed under the common seal of the wardens of the said guild, bearing date the 8th. of *January*, 1461; for

for till the *stat.* of the 23 of *Henry VIII.* it was lawful to convey lands and hereditaments to the use of such guilds, being no corporations established by law, as also to the use of one or more priests to officiate for them. And amongst other regulations made by Sir *Thomas Fulshurst* and the great inquest of the town, it was ordained that the freeholders with the wardens of the church should see that the guild-priests do observe and keep all such ordinances as are expressed in a book containing the said rules, and sealed with the company's seal, dated the 10th. day of *August*, in the 12 of *Henry VIII.* In the aforesaid ordinances there is mention made of the bailiff, who was the supreme officer of the town, in reputation, and had the like respect paid him that was usually given to bailiffs of legal corporations; he was annually chosen at the court-leet after *Michaelmas*, with the consent of the Lord of the leet, and while he had the Lord's consent and countenance he was a useful officer to the town; but, upon some displeasure taken by the Lord *Cholmondeley*, his election was suspended and never since renewed; since that time the burden has lain the heavier upon the constables, who were always next in reputation, and in point of power superior. It is, however, some alleviation of the burthen of their office (which would otherwise be much heavier

heavier than it is) that the other fees, parcel of the barony have their several constables appointed to act in them.

The next in office, though ^{new} in disuse; were formerly the *rulers* of *walling*, these were annually elected by the jury out of the most substantial occupiers of *walling*, who were the guardians of the salt springs and intrusted to set the price of salt, and to limit the times of making thereof justly and indifferently, according to the known customs which they were sworn to keep and uphold. Moreover, to order an equal division of the brine to the several owners of the Wich-Houses; rooms for stowage of wood were provided even to an inch; they were to have a continual care and circumspection lest their pits should be deprived of any old rites or duties, or that the salt springs should receive mixture or prejudice from fresh springs, or other nuisances; all which and more is included in the term *walling*.

The next in order are the *Heath-keepers*; whose office it is, to look carefully to the common belonging to the town, called now by the name of Beam-Heath, anciently the *Creach*; not only to secure it from trespasses and usurpations of foreigners and strangers, but also to order

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and restrain the usage of it by the townsmen according to the laudable institutions on that behalf made and provided.

The next to them in office are the *Leave-lookers*, whose business is to inspect the markets, and examine the weights and measures which are used in buying and selling, and to take and destroy all unwholesome meat from the butchers and venders of fish, and other unsound provisions. It is supposed also, that there was a *Clerk of the market* to superintend these officers, and to order and affix the price of victuals.

After them follow the *Ale-tasters*, whose office extends to the assizing of bread and drink.

The *Fire-lookers* follow next, whose business is to view and prevent all defective chimnies, and to prevent, as much as in them lies, all casualties that may happen to the town by fire.

The last in order are the *Channell-lookers* or *Public-Scavengers*, to see to the sweeping and cleansing of the streets and channells, especially to the cleansing of the wells and water-courses, and to prevent all nuisances whereby men's bodily health might be impaired. All the said officers

officers are to make up their accompts, and to give in their presentments to the court.

The freeholders and inhabitants of *Nantwich* enjoy one peculiar advantage, which is an exemption from serving upon juries out of the town, or mixt with strangers. Their right to which envied privilege being called in question in the reign of *Edward III.* was then proved to have been enjoyed by the inhabitants, *time immemorial* and confirmed. It was again attacked in *Queen Elizabeth's* reign; and again confirmed, she ordered them an exemplification of the deeds and records relative to this contested privilege and that *Sir John Throckmorton, Knt.* should sign them. This was in the tenth year of her reign. Now, the inhabitants, in order to strengthen their right and to ascertain the authenticity of the deeds and records removed them into the office of exchequer in *Chester*, by writ of *certiorari*. They have also obtained the signature of all or most of the succeeding Chief Justices, and by the present one the Hon. *John Morton*. This was done, in order *finally* to determine all disputes relative thereto: Notwithstanding which, they were threatened with a fresh attack no longer since than the year 1762, which however, was not carried into execution. 'Tis strange that people pretending to all the com-

mon rights of liberty should be so prompt to invade the established customs and privileges of their neighbours. Few corporations in the kingdom, can shew stronger titles to their respective privileges (not even the Universities themselves) than ours: however, it served to raise so laudable and determined a spirit in the freeholders, as evinced the firmest resolution to defend their threatned privilege as will always reflect the highest honour upon them: Near sixty of the principal freeholders and inhabitants subscribing their names, as unanimously resolved to spare no expence in defending their common right.

From the general account of the town, I proceed to the public buildings, and first, as the principal, the church.

This ancient and venerable pile, dedicated to St. *Mary*, or as some say, to St. *Mary* and St. *Michael*; and others to St. *Thomas*; mistakenly without doubt, because not called in any ancient records but only by the name of St. *Mary*. This church is by some conjectured to be a *Norman* erection, yet it is most probable it is of older date. For by all the general marks from which a skilful antiquarian would form his judgment, it should be of *Danish* construction; namely, it's octangular tower, in the middle juncture of the cross,

cross, it's low doors, and lofty windows, with some other particulars. There are indeed some marks, especially the form of some of the arches of the windows being so achte, which would incline some to suppose it a *Saxon* edifice and then it must be more ancient; but if a *Danish* one, it was probably built in the time of one of the three *Danish Monarchs* who reigned before the restoration of the *Saxon Line* in the person of *Edward the Confessor*. It is therefore, no vague conjecture to suppose this church was built by *Canute the Dane*, surnamed the *Great*, from whom the town of *Knutsford*, or *Canute's ford* in this county received it's name, who mounted the *English Throne* upon the decease of *Edmund Ironside* in 1017, and who, to conciliate the affections of the *English*, built them many churches. It may reasonably be presumed that if it's erection had been the work of any of our *Norman Kings* or great Lords, so connected as those people were with this country, from their first influx into this Kingdom we should scarce have failed of ascertaining the date of it's erection, with some degree of precision; and I apprehend those who incline to believe it was founded by *William de Malbank* are mistaken, because they acknowledge at the same time that *Nantwich* had a church before the *Norman conquest*, and this is quite in the *Danish* stile. Probably
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he might be the founder or re-edifier of the chancel, a work not unworthy his power and munificent spirit. This fabrick (the magnificence of whose structure speaks the founder to be a person of no ordinary quality) ~~The chancel is now a~~ is a stately erection, attracts the notice of travellers, and engages the veneration of all who behold it, is built in the form of a cross not unlike, and little inferior to some cathedrals. The chancel cannot be equalled by any parish church in the county, having a choir and stalls in the manner of cathedral and collegiate churches, whose roof is of stone exquisitely compacted with imbossments curiously cut of scripture history, and was laid in colours, the ground whereof was blue, and the frettized work throughout was finely gilt; the sculpture-pieces formed along the concavity of it represent the principal events in the life of our *blessed Saviour* from his Nativity to his Ascension all beautifully painted and gilt, which together with it's then newly erected organ, ornamented on the outside of the loft, with the pictures finely painted of our *Saviour* and his twelve *Apostles*, were destroyed by the rage of fanaticism in the *Oliverian* days of anarchy and confusion. This chancel has the remains of a tessellated floor. The carved work of the choir part of it is executed in a masterly manner, happily escaping the barbarous

barous zeal of those furious reformers of monarchy, and the church remains to this day an ornament to this truly venerable pile. The altar-piece is a work of handsome modern architecture executed by that ingenious architect Mr. *William Toxall* of this town, lately deceased, on the South side of which are four seats, or rather niches in the wall, each rising about a hand's breadth higher than the others, which (in the opinion of a learned and inquisitive gentleman of this town, and skilful in his researches into what relates to the antiquities thereof) had a reference to the four ancient patriarchal seats of *Jerusalem, Antioch, Rome and Alexandria* — and probably were designed to receive the effigies of each respective patriarch. On the North side of the chancel is the vestry, which after a long time lying neglected, was put into decent repair, the mutability of time, however, has occasioned it to be again neglected and disused; at present the parochial business commonly transacted at vestry-meetings is done at the North end of the broad ile,

The late pious and ingenious Dr. *Thomas Brooke*, Dean of *Chester* and Rector of *Nantwich*, is interred within the rails of the altar. He was an excellent preacher, and a most amiable man! Prompted by the sincerest esteem and the highest respect

respect for his memory ; I beg leave to introduce an Elegy written at the time of his decease.

An Elegy on the Death of *Dr. Brooke*, Rector of *Nantwich* and Dean of *Chester*.

AH ! why recall'd to sing elegiac strains ?
 The muse long silent, mournfully complains ;
 What dire occasion ! what disastrous woe !
 Demands the grief, and bids our tears to flow ?
 Why all this sorrow, this sad solemn scene !
 Alas ! hath Heav'n thought fit to take the Dean ?
 Yes, Heav'n all gracious tho' it kill, or save,
 At length hath call'd him to the peaceful grave :
 Severe, not always in that awful doom,
 That brings frail mortals to the silent tomb ;
 The stroke of death, the wrath of Heav'n not meant,
 And Man's dismissal oft in mercy sent.

Ye once lov'd objects of his tend'rest care,
 Your piercing sorrows for his loss forbear ;
 Snatch'd from a life of trouble, and of pain
 Your loss in him, is his immortal gain ;
 But tho' to dust reduc'd his mortal frame,
 To after-ages shall survive, his fame ;
 Virtue like his, the waste of time defies,
 Shall mount sublime, and triumph in the skies.

Come then ye fav'rites of the tuneful nine !
 Restrain this rash, tho' fond attempt of mine ;
 Me far too weak, justly to chant his praise,
 Oh ! stop my feeble, but devoted lays ;

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The Muses flowers strew plenteous o'er his herse,
 His worth demands the tributary verse ;
 And as your numbers smoothly flow along,
 His bright accomplishments shall crown the song.

Methinks I see him venerably great,
 With form majestic fill the preacher's seat
 His voice, how charming! still methinks I hear;
 Ever distinct, harmonious, strong, and clear :
 His manly looks our free applause bespeak,
 E're from his lips the flow of rhetoric breaks ;
 With wrapt attention his whole audience hung,
 While heavenly truths seem'd mended from his tongue;
 (Such learned *Athens* holy *Paul* beheld,
 While there the truths divine the Saint reveal'd)
 Exalted Preacher! with what nervous sense,
 With more than *Ciceronian* eloquence,
 He charm'd our ears, and did our hearts engage,
 With soft Persuasion from the sacred page,
 Sublime his reasoning, elegant his stile,
 Polite his manners, affable his smile;
 His winning graces every heart subdu'd,
 Pleasing alike the learned and the rude.

Oh ever honour'd ! much lamented shade,
 Accept this tribute to thy memory paid ;
 Though far beneath thy most transcendent worth,
 To happier strains perchance they may give birth,
 Provoke some bard who higher flights can soar,
 To paint that virtue which these lays deplore.

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On the South side of the Chancel is a Tomb erected to the memory of ~~Thomas~~^{John} Maisterfon Esq. a gentleman of an ancient family in this town and his Lady, who was the daughter of *Randolph Stanley* Esqr. of *Alderley* in this county. The effiges of both are cut upon the tomb, with the following inscription on it.

“Within this fading tomb sepulted lyes
John Maisterfon and Margaret his Wyfe
Whose Souls do rest above the vaulted skyes
In Paradise with God the Lord of Lyfe.”

It appears by what follows, that this gentleman was of great service towards the re-edification of this town after the destruction, occasioned by the great fire which happened in *December* 1583, and consumed 600 Buildings, the damage whereof was computed at more than 30000 pounds, but providentially only two lives were lost. If this estimate with respect to the Buildings be true this town must have been much larger than at present it is; and indeed some very ancient people inform us its bounds have extended into the parish of *Aston*.—The inscription proceeds

“This John wrought means
To build this Nantwich town
When fyer, his Face, had fretted
And burn'd her down.”

Which

Which is also commemorated by an Eulogium in the same old verse, fixed up in a frame near the achievements of the family placed over the Tomb, he died 1586, and I find mention made of this gentleman in King's Vale Royal as a principal agent in gathering the collections which were set on foot thro' the kingdom, upon this melancholy occasion, which were greatly countenanced and encouraged by Queen *Elizabeth*, who was most graciously pleased to present the town with the sum of 2000 pounds, and a grant of a considerable quantity of timber out of the royal forest of *Derlamere*. He was also one of the commissioners in the trusts appointed by the said Queen, for rebuilding the town. *Sir Hugh Cholmondeley* was generously active in this affair also.

From the Chancel we proceed to the broad ile (as it is called) which forms the short part of the Cross, of which the whole fabrick of the Church is composed. On the right hand entring into which is a most substantial Pulpit of stone, still in good condition. Various have been the conjectures concerning it, as it seems to be too far detached from the body of the Church for common use; however, before the present ringing gallery and loft were built, it probably might have served for that purpose, which then proving incon-

venient (if not sooner) the present one was made, which formerly was placed near the seat of *Geofry Minshull* Esqr; and the front of the ringing gallery but by order of *Dr. Neal* Arch-Bishop of *York* was removed to its present situation in 1633. At the north end of the cross ile is our Lady's Chapel (which now or very lately retain'd the name of our Lady's Chancel) discovered from the adjoining part of the ile with a lofty arch. It appears not by whom this Chapel was founded, or what certain endowments it had, that it was possessed of some is evident by a deed made by the Wardens of the said Chapel, unto *Ralph Brett*, in the 47th, year of *Edward III.* to which Wardens or Overseers the care of it was committed. The South end of the cross ile, being a third part shorter than it now is, to make it uniform, was enlarged about the time of *Henry VII.* with the remains of the town castle. The Lord *Audley* being a considerable benefactor to the work, as also a person of the name of *Buckley*, then of good note in the town as seems by their * coats

*Buckley's coat is not now remianing, neither that mention'd by Camden to have been in this Church in which a Mitre was the bearing, with many others and much painting in glasse formerly in the Church.

in the south window of the said ile which is the fairest window belonging to the church, and the next window to it on the East side of the ile was *Kingeley's* coat, who in all probability was another benefactor to the said enlargement, and whether it were upon that account, or because his burial place was there) the South part of the cross ile, was called *Kingley's* ile, and in some of the windows in this part of the ile, are the arms yet remaining, of the worthy and ancient family of *Mainwaring*. The timber roof of this ile from end to end was made new since the said enlargement. The gentry whose armories are painted upon the several rafters were benefactors to the building of the said roof. The same may be said of the roof of the body of the church, the armories of many gentlemen being painted on these rafters likewise, in commemoration of their respective benefactors. In that spacious window at the South end of the cross, or broad ile, still remains the Lord † *Audley's*

* The present family name is Fouchet (Earl of Castle Haven in Ireland) this family receiv'd their honours and large possessions from the Audley's or Aldilley's as it was sometimes formerly written, a family very early ennobled by a marriage with Joan eldest sister to Nicholas the last Lord Audley of that name who died about the latter end of Richard II. or the beginning of Henry IV.

arms in fine condition, being first and fourth *ruby*, a *fret*, *topaz*; second and third *ermine*, a *chevron*, *ruby*. It is much to be regretted that no precaution has been taken to preserve it, by some wire-work on the outside as hath been done by that belonging to Mr. *Wilbrabam* and some others. In this part of the ile are several monuments remaining belonging to the family of *Wilbrabam* of *Towns End*, one of *Thomas Wetenhall*, Esq. and another of Mr. *Davenport*, Son of Sir *Hugh Davenport*, but none of them magnificent: and here is the tomb of Sir *David Graddock*, Knt. there is no inscription at present upon it, though probably there might have been at the time of it's erection, but the whole tomb is much mutilated and defaced so that the arms belonging to the family are not discoverable, yet, the shape of the escutcheons remain. The family arms, as noticed by *King* are *argent*, on a *chevron*, *azure*, three *gaibs Or*. When he died is not now known, but he was living about the year 1375, as appears by the grant of ten shops made unto him by one *William Wildbor*, this tomb is built of common stone; the effigies of Sir *David* is of alabaster in complete armour, his helmet open, his hands uplifted in a praying form, his head rests upon a lamb, and a lion se-
jant

jant is placed at his feet. By these circumstances, according to the doctrine of heralds, he should have fallen in battle on that side which was vanquished. In the North corner of this ile near to the vestry-table is affixed a monumental picture of Mr. *Thomas Church*, and of *Ann* his wife of the *Manwaring* family, put up *Anno Domini* 1634. The expression has by some connoisseurs been deemed to be masterly and the colouring fine, but much injured by one who undertook to refresh and clean it some few years ago. We now enter the body of the church: Upon the North wall near the entrance from the broad ile is a small monument erected by *Geofry Minshull* of *Stoke* Esqr. to the memory of his ancestors, and near the pulpit on the same side is another erected by *Elizabeth* relict of *Richard Minshull*, Gent. (which *Elizabeth* was sister to *Thomas Wilbraham*, Esq. the elder) to the memory of her said husband. Nigh unto the pulpit as it now stands is the burial-place belonging to the family of *Clutton*, which heretofore went by the name of *St. George's Chapel*, and in this chapel *Margaret Leech*, widow, by her last will, bearing date in 1545, appointed her body to be buried. This gentlewoman dwelt

dwelt in the *Welch-Row*, in the * *Porch-House* adjoining *Fulshurst-Lane*, which House was sometime the inheritance of *Henry Wettenhall* of *Darfold*, in the time of *Edward IV.*

The arms of this gentleman were in the window, next, and opposite to the said chapel of *St. George*, and denoted his interment in the said chapel. It is said, there was another chapel on the other side of the church, directly opposite to this, but not known by what name it was called, nor to whom it belonged, probably *St. Michael's* for that great antiquary, *Brown Willis* says the Church itself was dedicated to *St. Mary* and *St. Michael*, but he is certainly mistaken because it is not called by any other name than *St. Mary* in any deeds or records; and mistakes of this sort have sometimes arisen by calling Churches themselves after some particular Chapels contained in them, we have noted before that there was another Chapel in the broad ile called *St. Mary's*, and here I cannot help thinking that from this very circumstance of there being a Chapel called *St. Mary's* at *Nantwich* within the Church and the Church itself bearing the same name hath

* Upon this site are now erected the elegant Stables of Mr. Henry Tomkinson.

sprung

sprung that mistaken opinion that our Church was only a Chapel of Ease to that of *Acton*.

On the other side of the pillar is erected a small monument to the memory of *Margaret and Elizabeth Wright*, daughters and coheirs of *Richard Wright*, Gent.

On the South-side of the body of the Church entering into the cross ile was * a monument set up by the Right Worshipful Sir *Randle Crewe*, Knt. late *Lord Chief Justice of England*, to the happy memory of *John Crewe*, Gent. father of the said Sir *Randle* and of Sir *Thomas Crewe*, Knt. Serjeant-at-law to King *James I.* when Sir *Thomas* out of his affectionate respect to the place of his birth, gave the inheritance of some fee-farm rents in *Buglawton*, amounting to 28*l.* per annum at that time, to the poor in the *Hospital-Street* in *Namptwich*, which is now increased by several augmentations. On a window on the South-side the body of the Church, still remain the arms of the *Eardswick* family, formerly of great note in this neighbourhood, but removed

* This monument upon the erection of the South gallery was taken down: The remains of it are in the old vestry.

from these parts to *Sanden* in *Staffordshire* : They are, *Or*, on a *chevron* *gules* 5 *bezants* ; with a scrol on the escutcheon, with the words *Richard Eardswick, Margaret, 1338*, being the earliest date extant in the church. This *Mr. Eardswick* was a gentleman of great and ancient extraction, being descended in a direct male line from *Hugo de Vernon*, the first *Baron* of *Shipbrooke* ; and the said *Margaret* his wife, from *William de Malbenge*, the first *Baron* of *Nantwich*, being the only child of *Sir James Stafford*, whose mother *Adila*, was the only daughter of *William*, the grandson of *William de Malbenge, Baron of Nantwich*.

The body of this spacious Church is almost a square, having galleries on all sides ; those on the North and South are modern erections, the seats of which are handsome, commodious and uniform, especially the front ones of both are large and roomy, and lined with green cloth. The roof covered outwardly with lead, and curiously constructed of wood within, is supported by 12 large pillars branching out into spacious and noble arches, which are strengthened by smaller ones, abutting from the main wall and joining to the larger. On the front of the West gallery which was built in 1626, are painted on the pannels 15 ancient coats of arms, the 7 first belong

belong to the Earls of *Chester*, who governed *Cheshire* with little less than kingly authority for the space of 147 years, from *William the Conqueror* to *Henry III.* The other 8 coats, are those of the great Barons created by the said Earls.

The EARLS are

1. *Hugh Lupus*,
2. *Richard* his son.
3. *Randolph de Bobun*, his nephew.
4. *Randolph de Vernon*.
5. *Hugh Bobun*; alias *Kiviliac* (from a place in *Wales* so called) where he was born.
6. *Randulph de Blundeville*.
7. *John Scot*, who having no male-issue, the eldest sons of the Kings of *England* have ever since assumed the title of Earls of *Chester*.

The BARONS are

1. *Richard*, Baron of *Monthalt* or *Hawarden*; Steward or Seneschal of *Chester*; who dying without will, left *Isabel*, Queen of *England*, and *John of Eltham*, Earl of *Cornwall*, his heirs.
2. *Nigel* or *Niel*, Baron of *Halton*; Constable and Marshal of *Chester*; whose possessions came in time to the *Lacies* Earls of *Lincoln*, and at last by a marriage with *Blanch*, a daughter of that house to the famous *John of Gaunt*.

3. *William de Malbank*, Baron of *Nantwich*, whose nephew's daughter conveyed the inheritance to the *Vernons* and *Bassets*.

4. *Richard Vernon*, Baron of *Shipbrooke*; whose inheritance by failure of issue-male, came to the *Wilbrahams*, *Staffords*, and *Littleburies*.

5. *Robert*, or *David Fitzhugh*, Baron of *Malpas*; from whom the noble family of *Egerton* is derived.

6. *Hamon de Massie*, Baron of *Dunham-Massie*; whose possessions descended to the *Phittons*; one branch of the *Venableses*, and to the family of *Booth*, Earl of *Warrington*; and by the heiress of that house, to the family of *Grey*, Earl of *Stamford*.

7. *Gilbert Venables*, Baron of *Kinderton*; whose heirs-male have continued in direct line to this day, in the person of *George Venables Vernon*, Lord *Vernon* of *Sudbury*.

8. *Robert Fitz-norman*, Baron *Stockport*; from whom and the Earls of *Warren-Surrey*, the present Sir *George Warren*, Knight of the Bath, is lineally descended.

These Barons had their free courts of all pleas and plaints, except those pleas which belonged to the Earl's sword, and were bound in the times of

of war in *Wales*, to find for every Knight's fee, one horse with caparison and furniture (or two without) in the divisions of *Cheshire*; also that their knights and freeholders should have corselets and habergeons to defend the lands with their own bodies, as the county often suffered greatly from the excursions of the *Welch*: Once in particular, when *Ranulph de Vernon* the 4th Earl was a captive in the castle of *Lincoln*, taking advantage of that brave man's misfortune, they made dreadful ravages over all the adjacent parts, but at length suffered a total defeat at *Nantwich*. Over the porch on the South-side of the Church is a square room, wherein formerly stood a chest with 3 locks, for the safe-keeping of the records and evidences concerning the Church, which was removed into the vestry; which chest, or the room over the porch where it stood, was supposed to be the *Treasury of our Lady* mentioned in the schedule of uses annexed to the feoffment, made by one *Randle Dykes* for the maintenance of an obit. But some profane and sacrilegious hand hath robbed the Church of her treasure and her records; for want of which, we know so little of her antiquities. This room is now set apart for a library for the use of the neighbouring clergy, and furnished with books in divinity. The dimensions
of

of this Church will sufficiently speak its magnificence, being from the West door ~~from~~^{to} the Chancel end 155 feet 2 inches, the breadth to form the cross 98 feet 2 inches, the body of the Church 73 feet 6 inches long, and 57 feet broad, the broad ile 98 feet 2 inches long, the breadth 28 feet 2 inches, the Chancel 51 feet long and 24 feet 10 inches wide, the height of the Steeple 100 feet and something more; the whole fabrick is covered with lead (except the vestry) and embattled all about; the battlements and buttresses garnished with lofty pinnacles, and (to the praise of the architect be it spoken) no clefts or rents to be discerned throughout the whole fabrick, although it stands upon springs. In a word, all that can be wished is, that the founder, whoever he was, had endowed it with maintenance answerable to the structure, and that the records had been more carefully kept, whereby it might appear, when, and by whom this magnificent structure was built. It is a small rectory, containing in its parochial bound, the four rural townships of *Alvandeston*, *Woolston-Wood*, *Leighton*, and part of *Willaston*, which townships contain scarce more than 30 houses. The living exclusive of the voluntary contributions of the inhabitants (which is a very disagreeable mode of augmentation) is not considerable, part of the tithes being in lay hands;

hands ; this, in some measure, may be accounted for from the following circumstance. In the year 1133, *Hugh de Malbank* appropriated both *Aſton* and *Nantwich* Church (or Chapel as he is pleased to call it) to his newly erected Abby of *Combermere*. Both Churches became thereby stripped of a considerable portion of their revenues, and ever after our Church was supplied with a Curate appointed by the Abbot, with such a stipend as he was pleased to allow. Upon the outward West-end of this Church, is a dial of a singular construction : its form is orbicular, and within the orb at the top is a sun, rayonant (as the heralds term it) from which depends a label with this inscription : *Solem quis dicere falsum audeat*. And in the border round the top, another, to wit, ^{Monos} *DoMIno pro paCe popVLo sVo* *parta*. The letters which overtop the rest are meant to denote the date of its erection, and is the manner in which the wit of those days was frequently display'd ; for being numerals, when added together, they produce 1661. The words then, *Pace populo suo parta*, have undoubtedly a reference to the Restoration of *Charles II.* who was crowned on the 23d of *April* (St. George's day) 1661.

We are now got into the Church-yard, which
being

being planted with trees and having several good buildings around it, hath much the appearance of a spacious square. The Rector's house is a genteel brick fabrick built by Dr. Brooke, Dean of Chester, and Rector of Nantwich, towards which (in consideration of his great merit, and the affectionate regard borne him) his parishioners largely contributed. Entering the Church from the Church-yard, we now *descend*, though it is certain our ancestors *ascended* some steps into it: and in digging graves, pavements and grave-stones have been discovered at the depth of two yards or more. Though the Church-yard is a very large one, and seemingly sufficient for the interment of all the dead, yet that illaudable custom prevails here, of burying within the Church; but these graves are not very eligible ones, for scarce are they got a foot below the surface, but the coffins are immerst in water.

Before I proceed to other matters, it may be proper now to discuss the question, Whether the Church of Nantwich was ever a Chapel of Ease to the Church of Acton? I hold the negative opinion. First then let us see what constitutes a Parish-church, and if ours is found to have
always

always possessed the necessary requisites, we may confidently conclude *Nantwich*-Church was never a Chapel to that of *Acton*; this I shall endeavour to prove.

In the primitive Church of the *English Saxons*, parishes were limited only in regard to the ministering *Presbytery*, who had their limits assigned them by the *Bishop*; and not in regard to parochial profits; for in those times the whole profit of each diocese made a common treasure to be disposed of by the *Bishop* and his *Clergy*; but afterwards, when devotion grew to a higher pitch, divers laymen of the best quality built Churches, and endowed them with peculiar maintenance for the incumbent, who should there reside; which maintenance, with other ecclesiastick profits which came to the hands of every such several incumbent, was by this means restrained from the common treasury of the diocese, and annexed to the particular Church so founded; and out of these lay-foundations chiefly came those kind of parishes which at this day are in every diocese. The first express limitation of profits to be given to this or that Church, is in the laws of King *Edgar* Anno, 970, where there is a threefold division of Churches. The

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first

first is called *Senior Ecclesia*, or the Mother Church; the second, a Church that had a place for burial; the third, a Church without a place for burial. Where it is ordained, that a man not having entered a Church of his own, should pay his tithes to the next Mother Church where he heard God's service. And that the other Churches might not be over impoverished by those of later foundation; the founders of Churches whereto the right of sepulture was annexed, were to settle above a third part of their tithes upon their new built Churches. But these new erections in old parishes bred new divisions, and by connivance of the times became whole parishes. For the right of sepulture was, and regularly is a character of a Parish-church, or *Ecclesia*, as it is commonly distinguished from *Capella* a Chapel. And a *Quare impedit* brought for a Church, where the *Deft* pretended it to be but a Chapel, the issue was not so much, whether it were Church or Chapel, as whether or no it had *Baptisterium* and *Sepulturam*. For if it had the right of administration of sacraments in it, and sepulture also, then it differed not from a Parish-church. Those other Churches, which in *Edgar's* laws are spoken of, which had no places of burial, are those which at this day are called

called Chapels of Ease, built for oratories, but not diminishing any thing of the Mother Churches profit. Thus speaks the learned *Selden*, from which I conceive it clear, that *Nantwich*-Church which always possessed the distinguishing requisites was a *Principio* a Parish-Church, and never a Chapel of Ease to that of *Acton*; I mean not however to say that *Acton* was not the older Church, it might be so, and till such time as ours was built, no doubt according to the laws then established, the inhabitants of *Nantwich*, and the neighbouring villages paid their tithes to it as being the next Mother Church, but after *Nantwich*-Church was built (which was before *Hugh Malbank* built the *Abby of Combermere*, though in his grant he passeth it by the name of *Capella*) it is more than probable, the founder, according to the custom of those times, endowed the new built Church with some portion of the tithes that were formerly paid to the Church of *Acton*, viz. besides the tithes of the town, with those of *Alvandeston*, *Willaston*, *Woolston-Wood* and *Leighton*, which lay near and convenient to this new built Church, and furthest off from *Acton*, and so made it a Parish. 'Tis not probable that a Church almost as large as a Cathedral, that had a Dean and six Priests belong-

ing to it, that had a right of sepulture and the sacraments, should be a Chapel of Ease to another, in whose jurisdiction or deanery that other lay. The deed made by *Robert*, son of *Robert de Hextal*, (long before *Richard II.* in whose time the *Abbot* of *Combermere* pretended a title thereto, as being a Chapel annex to *Acton*) proves its exercising the administration of the sacraments by the grant of certain lands for the health of his soul, and the souls of his friends. *Deo et beatae Mariae, et Ecclesiae beatae Mariae de Vico Malbano* for the maintenance of a perpetual priest to say service in the said Church, the said priest to be elected by him and his heirs, *cum Concilio et Consensu totius Parochiae*. And warrants the said Lands, *Deo et Altari beatae Mariae Ecclesiae predictae*. Thus its right of administering the sacraments appears from the warranting these lands to the *Altar*, and the word *Ecclesiae* shews it to be a *Church* and not a *Chapel*. And that it had an undoubted right of sepulture before the *Abbot's* claim, the 22d of *Richard II.* is proved as well by the monument of *Sir David Craddock Knt.* who lies buried in the cross ile; and that it was possessed of this right before the foundation of *Combermere*, appears by the houses and possessions of the dissolved Abby, which are
upon

upon the Church-Yard, a spacious spot of ground within the very heart of the Abbots Fee, but no part of it ; I say my point is proved by these evidences ; as likewise by numerous other deeds still extant but too many to be here cited, one will be sufficient for the purpose.

A Translation of a Deed proving *Nantwich-Church* to be a *Parish-Church* and not a *Chapel*.

“ **T**O our well beloved children in Christ as
 “ well as known. *William Howe* and
 “ *Sybyll* his wife, with all others whatsoever.
 “ We, *William Ruddock* and *William Lynch*,
 “ Stewards of the Guilds or Fraternities of *Wich-*
 “ *Malbank*, lawfully deputed send greeting, that
 “ by the prayers and suffrages of the Saints ye
 “ may obtain cælestial joys. Forasmuch as out
 “ of the goods bestowed upon you, ye have mu-
 “ nificently contributed to the maintenance of
 “ the Guilds aforesaid, and six Priests daily to
 “ officiate in the Church of the *Blessed Mary*, in
 “ *Wich-Malbank* aforesaid, for their brethren
 “ and sisters, alive and deâd ; we admit you to
 “ the participation of all the masses which in the
 “ said Church shall be celebrated, and to all
 “ other works and suffrages, which by our breth-
 “ ren

"ren are performed, by the tenour of these
 "presents in life as well as death. Farther
 "granting, that after death, your souls shall
 "be commended and offered by the prayers of
 "the Saints, Priests and Brethren of the Guild
 "aforesaid; masses, exequies and prayers being
 "performed for them as for other your breth-
 "ren deceased, is accustomed to be done. In
 "witness whereof, the seal of our said office is
 "hereunto appinded. Dated the 8th day of
 "January, 1461."

That it was an ancient deanery is proved by
 a deed made by the said *Hextall*, to which *Ni-*
cholas Ademet then *Dean* was a witness; and to
 corroborate which, an authentic copy of the
 last will of *William Kettel* of *Burwardsley*, which
 is attested to be proved before the *Dean* of
Wich-Malbank, in the said Church of *Wich-Mal-*
bank, on the 4th of November, 1361, is pre-
 served among the papers of an ancient and wor-
 thy family of this town. What Churches were
 within his jurisdiction may be found in a cata-
 logue of the benefices in *Cheshire* taken out of
 a M. S. in *St. John's Library* in *Cambridge*, and
 published by *King* in his *Vale Royal*. 'Tis true,
 in that catalogue no mention is made of *Nant-*
wich

wich Church, yet any argument drawn from that circumstance, to invalidate its title of a Church, must be feeble and ill-grounded, for, neither is there mention made, or notice taken of *Baddeley* or *Minshull*, whose title of Parish-Churches was never disputed; nor is the parochial Chapel of *Wrenbury* in that catalogue: so that this proves nothing but the very remote antiquity of the M. S. or the defective intelligence of the author respecting this point. It may be no improper question to ask the abettors of that opinion, who hold this Church to have been a Chapel of Ease to *Acton*, When, and upon what account came it to be dismembered? Transactions of this kind are of known and public notoriety; and some lights of such a business would undoubtedly have remained, had such an event ever happened. If an affair of this sort had been transacted in the time of the *Normans*, we should not now, I apprehend, be ignorant of it: their Charters, Grants, and other public Acts; their founding of Churches, Abbies and Monasteries, &c. are generally known and preserved: from whence we may conclude that *Nantwich* was never a Chapel of Ease to the Church of *Acton*; though it hath been deemed so by some, upon account of that writ which the *Abbot* of *Combermere* obtained from that weak Prince
Richard

Richard II. in the time of his distresses, when he began to pay his court to the powerful Churchmen in order to conciliate their affections, as one probable method towards reinstating his disordered affairs: for let it be remembered that this writ bears date in the last year of that King's reign, whose ill government, especially towards the latter end of it, much discontented his subjects; and it is not to be wondered at, if to redeem their opinion, especially the Churchmen's, he condescended in so small a matter, as about this time he had occasion to use their purses to furnish his expedition into *Ireland*, and bearing an especial favour to his subjects of *Cheeshire*, who generally composed his guard: upon which account, it is presumed the *Abbot*, at so critical a juncture more easily obtained his desire: notwithstanding which, he seems to have his doubts respecting the validity of his title, frequently speaking in dubious language, calling it at one time a Church, at another, a Chapel.

Nantwich hath felt at various times the severer dispensations of providence. The particular instances whereof that are found recorded, are these which follow. In the year 1438, it suffered greatly by fire, but much more deplorably in the year 1583, which was in the 26th
of

of *Eliz.* a most dreadful one consumed in one night all the dwellings from the river's side to the other side of the Church, but that, with the School-house, which is within the Church-yard, by the good providence of the Almighty, escaped the ravage of the devouring flames. It broke out on the 10th day of December, through the negligence of some indiscreet persons who were brewing in a place called the *Waterlode*, and being carelessly left took hold of some thatch; for though there are many good brick edifices in the town, yet the houses are generally built of timber with thatched roofs, and were indeed mostly so at that time. The flames catching the thatch, or some straw, or such light matter, burst forth to the roof of the house, and in a short space of time (the wind being S. W.) the flames were dispersed so furiously into the South part of the town, that in a short space a great part of that quarter and a considerable part of the East-side were burnt down to the ground. The fire began at six o'clock in the evening and continued till six o'clock in the morning following; having consumed more than two hundred houses, besides brew-houses, barns, stables and other buildings, in the whole about six hundred, among which were seven considerable inns,

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namely,

namely, the *Ship*, the *Cock*, the *Bell*, the *Crane*, the *Hart's-Horn*; the *Swan* and the *Bear*.

In the year 1596, the reduced troops who had served under the *Earl of Essex* in the expedition against *Cadiz*, brought the flux with them into England upon their return, which destroyed numbers of people. It particularly visited *Nantwich*, by means of one *George Fallowes*, a reduced soldier of that army, and a native of this town; (who communicated the disorder to the inhabitants) by which himself and a considerable number of them were cut off.

Eight years after, a calamity much more afflicting and dreadful visited this place. On the 12th day of June 1604, the *Plague* broke out most violently, and continued till the 2d day of March following; at which time, by the Almighty's gracious interposition it ceased, having in that space of time destroyed betwixt four and five hundred people. It still continued its ravages at *Chester* (from which place it was first brought here) and in most other parts of the county, for which reason *Nantwich* having the blessing of being sooner freed from the infection; the assizes were held here, and the court of exchequer at the same time was removed to
Tarvin.

Tarvin. When this plague raged so violently over all the kingdom, or in most parts of it, and which was brought from *Ostend* and many other places of the *Low-Countries*, by soldiers returning from thence, and by the ships of war lying long at sea, having infected various places but chiefly the city of *London*; great numbers of the inhabitants forsook it, and retired into the remoter shires: in their emigrations they were received (in some parts) indeed, with hospitality and kindness; but in most places despitefully used, and reviled in a most unchristian manner, and every relief denied them either for love or money, and their dreadful afflictions aggravated by being imputed to them as the just and immediate judgment of God inflicted upon them for their crying sins. It was remarked upon this occasion, that those places, who had humanely treated and kindly entertained the miserable wanderers the year before, when the plague first broke out in *London*, were least of all visited, or soonest freed from this dreadful evil, when it spread itself into the country this year. May we not hope then as this place was sooner released from this mighty affliction than most others of the county, that the inhabitants largely partook of that compassionate and charitable disposition which ever distinguishes the true christian, and

in such trying cases, always indicates a firm trust and confident reliance on the God of mercies.

Having been visited with *Fire* and *Pestilence*; the *Sword* at last reacht it, when misery and destruction stalked through the land in the unhappy days of King *Charles I.* yet did it not suffer so much from this last dispensation of providence as in the former; notwithstanding which, the excessive fatigue of body; the terrible anxiety of mind, and the continual dread of immediate destruction which apparently hovered over them when the town was besieged by Lord *Byron's* army in 1643, were no slight evils, but rendered them truly deplorable, while those alarming circumstances lasted. But not to violate the rules of chronology, other matters must be first treated of.

Here then, it may be proper to speak of the Salt-Works of this town, in their more ancient state, and as they have been honoured with a *Royal* visit in the person of King *James I.* The Welch of the North parts have always been, and still are supplied with this useful article of life from hence. Their commerce however was not always of the friendly kind; for they have frequently

quently infested these parts, committing many dangerous acts of hostility, whenever they had power or opportunity. They called the town *Hellath Wen*, or the White-Pit; and *Henry III.* in order to distress them, caused these pits to be stopped up for sometime. These Salt-Works were formerly more numerous perhaps than in most places of *England*, supplying all the adjacent countries, all *North-Wales*; besides large quantities exported to *Ireland* and other foreign parts: in the reign of *Queen Elizabeth* this town contained two hundred and sixteen Salt-Works of six *Leads-walling* each, which are now reduced to two Works of five large pans of wrought iron. This great diminution of trade is owing to various causes; such as the discovery of new Salt-springs in the adjacent places, at which Works have been erected. the superior advantages arising from the navigations at *Northwich*, and *Winsford* near *Middlewich*: another cause may probably be assigned from the frequent destruction by fire in the Works of this town, fourteen of which in the memory of persons lately living having been destroyed in one day, and it is well known that large tracts of now vacant ground upon both sides the river in our grandfather's days were covered with numerous Salt-Works; and in these places large pieces of
tim-

timber with the visible marks of fire upon them have been frequently dug up. The duty paid yearly at these Works amounts to near five thousand pounds, and the whole district (including the Works at *Lawton* and the small one at *Durtwich*) from eighteen to twenty thousand pounds communibus annis.

It was in the month of August, 1617, that his Majesty King *James I.* honoured this town with his royal presence. He took up his residence at *Town's-End*, the house of *Thomas Wilbrabam*, Esq; whose son Sir *Roger Wilbrabam*, Knt. was afterwards *Master of Requests* to the said King, and very eminent in his profession, the law. King *James*, when here, had the curiosity to visit the Salt-Works, with which he was highly pleased; where the whole process of converting the Brine into Salt was exhibited before him and explained to him; which after having minutely examined, he rewarded the workmen in a princely manner. The next day he was pleased to appoint a sermon to be preached before him, which was performed by the Rev. Mr. *Thomas Dod*, Arch-Deacon of *Richmond*, and to which his Majesty gave great attention, and was so much affected and pleased that the King immediately appointed him one of his chaplains

chaplains in ordinary. The same day an oration was pronounced before him by one of the scholars of the Free-school founded by Messrs. *John and Thomas Thrush*, wool-packers of the city of *London*, and natives of *Nantwich*, with which also his *Majesty* was pleased to express his satisfaction, as doing credit to the master *Mr. Randal Kent*, who had conducted this school with great reputation to himself for the long space of fifty years or more. It is at present worthily supplied by a gentleman of the name of *Kent*, who fills his place with great utility to the town and honour to himself. Here is also another school, where forty poor boys are cloathed and instructed in English and the older part in writing, supported chiefly by the charitable appointments of the family of *Wilbraham* of *Town's-End* which cloathes the boys. *Mr. Crewe* of *Crewe* hath generously augmented the salary. They are denominated *Blue-Caps*, from a cap of woollen cloth of that colour which they wear.

Besides the Salt-trade here, there is considerable business in the Shoe-trade, and a small manufactory of Gloves: these respective commodities are chiefly vended to the *London* merchants and tradesmen. The Bone-Lace and Knit-Stock-
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ing-trades which were heretofore considerable in this town are now quite declined.

The river *Wever* which rises from the springs about *Ridley*, six miles West from this town, is here a considerable stream, and is navigable at *Winsford* ten miles below this town for flats and barges of considerable burden; and after uniting with and receiving several other rivers and large streams, as the *Dane*, the *Bolin*, the *Wheelock*, the *Goit*, the *Peover*; which arise principally in the forest of *Macclesfield*; at *Windy-Weston* a little below *Frodsham* meeting with the *Mersey*; enlarged by the *Irwell* and its streams which runs by *Manchester*, becomes suddenly a mile broad: it there yields up its name to the *Mersey* after a course of thirty-three miles, and runs into the Irish sea at *Liverpool*.

Fully sensible of the benefits accruing from commerce, and in order more particularly to raise the declining trade in their staple commodity, Salt, by becoming partakers of the common advantages of navigation; an act of parliament was obtained about forty years ago to lengthen the navigation of the river *Wever* from *Winsford* up to *Nantwich*; notwithstanding which the execution of it has lain dormant to this day;

owing

owing to the jealousies and disputes betwixt the inhabitants and the persons employed to solicit the Act, who were deemed to have acted too partially in favor of themselves; and precluding in a great measure the advantages the other subscribers to the expence in obtaining the Act ought to have enjoyed. No doubt the town hath long and greatly suffered from this unfortunate circumstance; however it is to be hoped this disadvantage will in a little time be obviated by the new Canal now cutting between the city of *Chester* and *Nantwich*, a branch whereof is to be extended to the town of *Middlewich*, by which town the *Staffordshire* Canal hath a communication with the port of *Liverpool*.

Before the obtaining this last Act of Parliament for the Canal, the interest of the representative of the principal solicitor of the Act for making the *Wever* navigable from *Winsford* to *Nantwich*, was bought out with a considerable sum.

Enriched by the profits and gratefully sensible of the benefits accruing from the saline springs which so copiously flow around *Nantwich*; every *Ascension-Day* our pious ancestors sung a hymn of thanksgiving for the *blessing of the Brine*. That ancient Salt-Pit called the old *Biat*, (ever held in
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great veneration by the towns people, and if a Tradition not improbable may be credited was worked before the entrance of the *Romans* into *Britain*) was on that day bedecked and adorned with green boughs, flowers, and ribands, and the young people had music and danced around it, which custom of dancing and adorning the Pit continued till a very few years ago. By means of the river *Wever*, upon which Water-Works are erected, the town is well supplied with that useful element; the springs are also numerous here; and the Street called the *Welch-Row* hath that continual rivulet flowing down it which arises from the pools at *Dorfold* less than one mile from hence, which seldom fails the inhabitants in the driest summers.

I come now to describe the remarkable siege which *Nantwich* sustained in the time of the grand rebellion.

FROM whatever cause it proceeded, it is certain this town was very early engaged in the rebellion against King *Charles I.* By what means is uncertain. Perhaps by the prevailing interest of Sir *William Brereton*, a bitter enemy to church-government. He was one of the knights of the shire, and at the head of the parliament forces.

Peter

Peter Venables, Esq; and *George Booth*, Esq; were also knights of the shire in the parliament holden 1640—Before we proceed, let it just be observed, that this county afforded some of the name of *Brereton*, who were sufferers for their loyalty. In the catalogue of compounders for their estates, we find *William Lord Brereton* paying one thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight pounds, eighteen shillings. And *John Brereton of Brereton*. Esq; one hundred and fifty pounds.

To return. As this town was a garrison of the greatest strength in the hands of the rebels, on this side *Carlisle*, except *Manchester*, it became an object of great importance to the *King's* affairs, and measures were concerted to reduce it to obedience. Accordingly the Lord *Grandison* a little before the battle of *Edge-Hill*, (which was fought on the 23d of October 1642) march'd with a good body of troops for this service, which he effected by what the military now term a *Coup de Main*. When the *Royalists* became possessed of it, they plundered it and the adjacent parts of the country, and proceeded so far in their severities as to hang several people upon trifling occasions: however the *King's* affairs compelling him to recall his out-parties in order to strengthen the grand army, these troops quit-

ted *Nantwich*, and marched to join the *King* at *Edge-Hill*. In the mean time Sir *William Brereton* repossessed it for the parliament, and fortified it with mud-walls and ditches, in the best manner those times of haste and confusion allowed, and lost no time in victualling it; in which service the adjacent country people were very liberal and alert, in revenge for the impolitic and cruel treatment of the *Royalists*; and being reinforced with the remains of those troops, which were defeated by Lord *Byron* at *Middlewich*, and collecting some other scattered forces out of *Staffordshire* and *Derbyshire*; resolved to defend the town to the last extremity if it should be again attacked; which accordingly happened; for the *King* being victorious at *Edge-Hill*, and the cessation of arms in *Ireland* taking place; the Marquis of *Ormond* had sometime before dispatched a considerable reinforcement of horse and foot under Sir *John* (afterwards Lord) *Byron*; an officer of great abilities who occupied the city of *Chester* which stood firm to the *King*. With these troops; a very formidable body of veterans, inured to hardships and despising dangers, commanded by officers of great skill, courage and experience, and being also lately inspirited by the reduction of several strong places in

in the neighbourhood, such as *Hawarden* * and *Beeston Castles*, the capital houses of *Crewe* and *Doddington*, the Churches of *Acton* and *Bartemley*; these successes, together with the recent defeat of the *Parliament's* forces near *Middlewich*, determined Lord *Byron* to besiege the town in form, though in the depth of winter, and accordingly he sat down before it in the first week in January, 1643, and immediately sent them the following summons.

To the Commanders, Soldiers and Inhabitants
of the Town of *Nantwich*.

THAT it may appear to all the world, that neither I, nor the army under my conduct, desire the blood or ruin of any (as we have been

* *Hawarden Castle* was taken after a fortnight's siege. *Beeston Castle* surrendered immediately by the treachery of one of the guards and the cowardice of the governor, who was executed for it. *Crewe-House*, not submitting though twice summoned to surrender, was furiously assaulted, but the assailants were repulsed with considerable loss; but being at length in want of ammunition and despaired^{of} of relief, capitulated upon quarter being given them for their lives. *Doddington-House* submitted on the first summons, without firing a shot.

been most falsely and maliciously scandalized in that behalf) but that our chief aims and endeavours are to reduce the people to their obedience to his *Majesty* and settle the country in peace without shedding of blood; I have thought good, before I engage myself upon the town to let you know. (1st) That I do in his *Majesty's* name charge and command you to deliver up the said town of *Namptwich*, with all the arms, artillery, ammunition, and other things therein, into my hands, for his *Majesty's* use; and that all commanders, soldiers and others immediately lay down their arms and submit to his *Majesty's* mercy. (2) I promise pardon to such as shall readily lay down their arms and submit, and shall give safe conduct to such as shall desire to go to their houses in the country, and will protect both them and the inhabitants of the town in their persons and estates, except such, as his *Majesty* hath excepted. (3) If you refuse these conditions, I shall, by God's help, use other means for the recovery of his *Majesty's* rights, and vindicating of his and the country's wrongs; whereby, if you and those many good people who are forced to be among you shall perish, both your own blood and theirs shall rest upon your own heads. I am content to allow two hours for the return of an answer, and admit a
cessation

ceffation of arms till that time be expired. If you fend two men of quality, the one a foldier, and the other a town's man to treat with me; (or fuch as I fhall appoint) of the time, and manner of the render of the town, I will give fafe conduct, and caution for their fafe return.

John Byron.

To this a verbal answer was returned importing that the town was kept for the *Ufe of the King*, (what hypocrify!) and the *Parliament*; and by their fpecial direftions; and that they were refolved to keep it againft him and his forces, fo long as God fhould enable them. As foon as this answer was received the cannonading the town began in a furious manner, not only with cold, but hot bullets night and day; yet fo little execution was done that only one man and one woman were killed, and a ftack of kids on the back of Mr. *Wilbraham's* houfe, burned; although on the 17th of January they fired a hundred fhots from one mount only againft the town and its works. Thefe vigorous meafures not producing the defired effect, Lord *Byron* was determined to ftorm the town; but before he put his refolution into praftice fent the following fummons.

To

To the Inhabitants and Commanders of the
Town of *Nantwich*.

WHEREAS I am certainly informed as well by divers of the soldiers who are now my prisoners, as by several other creditable persons, that you are not only in a desperate condition, but that the late summons I sent to the town hath been suppressed and concealed from the inhabitants thereof; and they most grossly abused, by being told that no mercy was intended to be shewed by this army to the town, but that both man, woman and child should be put to the sword: I have therefore thought fit once more to send unto you, that the minds of the people with you may be dispossessed of that false and wicked slander which hath been cast upon this army: and I do charge you (as you will answer Almighty God for the lives of those persons who shall perish by your perfidious dealings with them) that you impart and publish the said summons I sent to the people with you, and that you yield up the town of *Namptwich* into my hands for his *Majesty's* use, and submit yourselves to his *Majesty's* mercy which I am willing to offer unto you. Though I am confident that neither of yourselves, nor by any aid that can come unto you; there is any possibility for you
to

to escape the hands of this army. If you please to send two gentlemen of quality to me, the one a Commander the other a Town's-Man, whereby you may receive better satisfaction, I shall give safe conduct and hostage for their return. I do expect a present answer from you

Jan. 16th, 1643.

John Byron.

To which the following answer was return'd.

WE have received your last summons and do return this answer; that we never reported or caused to be reported that your *Lordship* or the army, intended any such cruelty, we thinking it impossible for Gentlemen and Soldiers so much to forget humanity: and if any have informed you otherwise, it is their own conceit, and no reality. Concerning the publishing of your former summons, it was publickly read among the Soldiers and Town's-Men as your Trumpeter can inform you, and since that time multitudes of copies have been dispersed amongst the Town's-Men and others, and from none hath it been concealed or detained. For the delivery of this town; We may not with our consciences, credits, or reputations, betray that trust reposed in us for the maintaining and defending this town as long as any enemy shall appear to offend it. Though

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we be termed traytors and hypocrites, yet we hope and are confident, God will evidence and make known to the world in his due time (though for the present we should suffer) our zeal for his glory our unfeigned and unspotted loyalty towards his *Majesty* and sincerity in all our professions

George Booth.

Thus for some time the parleying betwixt the assailants and the besieged continued, and the following paper was addressed to the garrison by *Captain Sandford* a very gallant officer who was slain at *Wicksted's-Sconce* on the town-side upon his assault of that work about three days after.

To the Officers, Soldiers, and Gentlemen in
Nantwich, these,

YOUR drum can inform you *Aſton-Church* is no more a prison but now free for honest men to do their devotions therein; wherefore be perswaded from your incredulity and resolve. God will not forsake his anointed. Let not your zeal in a bad cause dazzle your eyes any longer, but wipe away your vain conceits, that have too long led you into blind errors. Loath I am to undertake the trouble of perswading you into obedience, because your erroneous opinions do most violently

violently oppose reason among you. But however if you love your town accept of quarter: and if you regard your lives, work your safeties by yielding your town to *Lord Byron* for his *Majesty's* use. You now see my battery is fix'd, from whence fire shall eternally visit you day and night to the terror of your old and females, and consumption of your thatcht houses. Believe me gentlemen I have laid by my former delays and am now resolved to batter, burn and storm you. Do not wonder th at I write unto you, having Officers above me, 'tis only to advise you because I have some friends among you, for whose safety I wish you to accept of my *Lord Byron's* conditions; he is gracious and will charitably consider of you: accept of these as a summons that you forthwith furr ender the town and by that testimony of your fealty to his *Majesty* you may obtain favor. My firelocks you know have done strange feats both by day and night; and hourly we will not fail of our private visits to you, you have not as yet received mine alarms, wherefore expect suddenly to hear from my battery and approaches before the *Welch-Row*,

Thomas Sandford.

To which he added—Gentlemen,

Let these resolve your jealousies concerning our Religion: I vow by the faith of a Christian I

know not one Papist in our army ; and as I am a gentleman, we are no **Irish*, but true born *Englishmen* and real protestants born and bred: pray mistake us not but receive us in your fair esteem. I know we intend Loyalty to his *Majesty* and will be no other than faithful in his service. This gentlemen beleive from yours

Thomas Sandford.

This gentleman the daybefore his death said to one of the garrison's drums " Sirrah behold the " messenger of death, *Sandford* and his firelocks, " who neither use to give, nor take quarter. " And the following order was found in his pocket.

Major Hammond with that Regiment under his command and the firelocks with the scaling ladders.

The firelocks and all the dragoons armed with firelocks, or snaghances to fall on the first, so near unto the fall of the river as may be on the left hand of the bulwark, to be seconded by 100 muske-

*This army was called *Irish* for the sake of distinction tho' there was not an *Irish* Man amongst them, but where some little time before sent over from *Ireland* to the King's assistance by the *Marquiss* of *Ormond*, upon the cessation of arms taking place there.

musketeers; then a body of pikes; then a reserve of musketeers. Let the soldiers carry as many faggots as they can.

Jan. 17, 1643. *Richard Gibson.*

The field word, *God and a good Cause.*

The assailants now finding all their summonses disregarded formed the resolution to attempt the capture of the town by storm; accordingly the besiegers gave a general assault on the 18th, day of *January* from five different quarters at once a little before day break, on notice given to one another by a shot of one of their ordnances, but where so warmly received by the garrison that they were repulsed at every attack with great slaughter and compelled to draw off with the loss of betwixt 3 and 400 men. Leaving dead at the *Wall-Lane-End*, Lieutenant Colonel Bolton, 1 captain and many officers and the prime of their soldiers of the *Red-Regiment*; many were cast into the river, and many others carried off dead and wounded. At *Wicksted's-Sconce* (besides captain Sandford mentioned before) was killed his lieutenant and several soldiers, with many more carried off dead and wounded. At *Pillory-Street-End* left dead, 1 captain, 2 lieutenants, 2 ensigns, and 17 common men of the *Green-Regiment*, and 60 slain and

and wounded carried off. At the back of *Mr. Manwaring's* were killed 2 lieutenants and 13 common men, besides many dead and wounded carried off. At the *Sconce* near *Lady Norton's* 1 captain was killed and 15 soldiers, besides the dead and wounded conveyed away, and there was taken prisoners by the Garrison 18 officers and soldiers mortally wounded. Yet, notwithstanding the army suffered so greatly at this bloody attack they still made good their Siege, determined if possible to master the town, but success began now to forsake them, for this Siege hitherto protracted to a length which exhausted the patience of the assailants and baffled all their attempts now drew towards a crisis. *Fairfax* being victorious at *Selby* in *Yorkshire* led a good body of horse hitherwards, and calling at *Manchester*, brought from thence and the neighbouring parts near 3000 foot which being joined by *Sir William Brereton* who had left the command of the garrison to the next in rank, supposed to be the person who sign'd *George Booth* to the answer to *Lord Byron's* second summons, and collecting the scattered forces of *Staffordshire* and *Derbyshire*, and the fugitives from the fight of *Midlewich*, his army becoming considerable by these reinforcements determined him to attempt the relief of the town. *Lord Byron* had early intimation of his motions

motions, but believing that his utmost design was to induce him to rise from before the town and to retire without fighting him, and prickt on by the success of his former exploits became too confident and kept his posts too long, which in the end proved fatal to him. Yet resolutely waiting for *Fairfax* a battle became unavoidable, the consequence whereof was a total defeat to the *Royalists* and the raising the Siege of the town. One principle thing which contributed to *Lord Byron's* defeat was, the inactivity of the horse occasioned by the sudden thaw which came on at this juncture; and being confined in deep lanes with great and high hedges, were rendered incapable to sustain or relieve the suffering infantry. His troops occupying both sides of the river *Wever* the thaw so swelled it, that it parted one body of his army from the other, which compelled him to fetch a compass of 5 miles about, in order to effect his junction with the separated corps. The experienced *Fairfax* took advantage of this incident, and (aided by a timely sally from the town) charged and defeated that body before *Lord Byron* could come to its relief, it was entirely broken and forced to take shelter in *Acton Church*, here they were soon compelled to surrender being 1500 foot with the cannon and carriages, besides a considerable number of officers,

cers, amonst whom was *Colonel Monk* afterwards the famous *General* and the happy instrument of restoring *King Charles II.* *Lord Byron* with all the horse and the rest of the foot made good their retreat to *Chester*. I cannot quit the account of this memorable Siege, without taking notice of the great service and activity of the Towns-Women; headed by an heroine of the name of *Brett* who defended the works with the utmost bravery, and did great execution on the 18th of *January* when the desperate assault was given, by pouring hot brine upon the assailants, one of whom gaining the wall, too prematurely cry'd out *the town is our own*. In commemoration of the raising the Seige which happened upon *St. Paul's Day* 1643, upon every anniversary of it, 'till of late the inhabitants wore sprigs of *Holly* in their hats in token of victory, and the day itself upon that account was called the *Holly-Holy-Day*, some remains of these earthen fortifications are still to be seen which cost in constructing 335 pounds 8 shillings and seven-pence, a proof (it may be said) of the cheapness of labour in those days; I rather apprehend the town and adjacent parts having been (as before was observed) cruelly and impolitically treated by *Lord Grandison* and dreading no doubt the same, or worse, from the army under *Lord Byron*, did voluntarily and largely con-

tribute to the construction of these works, both in labour and money.

From the defection of *Nantwich*, in its allegiance to the unhappy *Charles I.* a town ever remarkably loyal to its princes, both before and since; we may learn how unfortunate *Kings* may sometimes become, by entrusting their power and authority (conferred for good purposes) into the hands of cruel and tyrannic ministers. This gave Sir *William Brereton*, a gentleman then of great power in these parts, and a Presbyterian, the opportunity of taking the advantage of circumstances so favourable to his cause, and thereby too easily debauching the town from its wonted loyal principles: yet, so circumstanced, the town, without all doubt, could not but look upon Lord *Byron's* defeat as a very signal deliverance, as they had every thing to dread had he succeeded, and it was wonderful that he had not master'd the town before the arrival of *Fairfax's* relief, from the following considerations:

1st, The man upon whom the eyes of the garrison were most fastened, for his known sufficiencies, and from whom they had the largest expectation of direction and encouragement, was taken prisoner a little before the siege.

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2dly,

2dly, The besiegers were men of great experience, who had run through all sorts of services, and were expert in all the policies of war.

3dly, They were men acquainted with the greatest hardships, habituated to cold and want, and whatever a winter-siege could require.

4thly, They were inspirited by their former successes, which served to render them daring and desperate; men of approved valour, on whom conquests and victory had hitherto attended.

5thly, They were in view of a large plunder, and nothing but an *earthen-work* betwixt it and them.

6thly, Lord *Byron's* army was superior in number to *Fairfax's*.

7thly, They had a *female-regiment*, and these were weaponed too; and when these degenerate into cruelty, there are none more bloody.

And lastly, What is very wonderful, that this siege should be attended with so little bloodshed to the besieged, who lost but four lives in the town, and but twenty in the fight.

The

The following is Sir *Thomas Fairfax's* Letter to the *Earl of Effex*, upon occasion of this victory.

May it please your Excellency,

I DESIRE your pardon, that I have not given your Excellency an account before this, of the great mercy God hath shewed us, in giving us a happy victory over the *Irish army*, to the total ruin of their foot, and purchase of their chief commanders. Upon the 21st of January, I marched from *Manchester* towards *Namptwich*, to relieve that town, with 2,500 foot, and 28 troops of horse; the enemies forces were above 3,000 foot, and 1,800 horse. The first encounter we had was with a party of theirs, upon the forest of *Delamere*, where about 30 were taken prisoners; about six miles further, they maintained a passage (*Bar-bridge*) against us, with about 200 men. I caused some foot and dragoons to be drawn out to force it, which, by God's assistance, they did in half an hour's space, and there took a *Major* and some prisoners. Having advanced some two miles further, we found a good body of them planted about *Acton-Church*, a mile from *Namptwich*. We drew up within cannon shot, which sometimes played upon us, but without hurt, God be thanked.

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We there understood that the *Lord Byron*, who had besieged the town on both sides the river, was prevented, by overflowing of the water, from joining that party at *Acton-Church*; but heard that he was taking a compass to get over the river to join with it, we resolved to fall upon that party at the Church, before he should get up to it; but staying to bring up our rear and carriages; we gave him time to obtain what he sought for*. Then we resolved to make way with *Pioneers*, through the hedges, and then to march to the town to relieve it, and to add some more force to ourselves, to enable us the better to fight with them; but being a little advanced on our march, they told me the enemy was close upon the rear, so facing about two regiments, being Colonel *Holland's*, and Colonel *Booth's*, I marched not far before we came to be engaged with the greatest party of their army, then the other party presently after assaulted our front; there Sir *William Brereton*, and Colonel *Ashton*, did very good service, and so did Colonel *Lambert*,

*. This account differs from *Lord Clarendon*, and others, who assert that *Lord Byron's* army was attacked in its separation, and to which the constant tradition of the town assents.

bert, and Major *Copley*, with the horse. They were once in great danger, but that they, being next the town, were assisted with forces which came to their succour in due time. We in the other wing were in as great distress, but that the horse, commanded by Sir *William Fairfax*, did expose themselves to great dangers to encourage the foot, though capable of little service in those narrow lanes; yet it pleased God, after two hours fight, they were forced by both wings to retreat to the Church, where they were caught as in a trap. A list of what we took I have here sent your Excellency, &c. &c.

I am your Excellency's
most humble Servant,

Namptwich,
29 January, 1643.

Tho. Fairfax.

A List of the Prisoners taken at *Aston-Church*,
January 25, 1643, near *Namptwich*.

Major General *Gibson*

Colonels.

Sir *Michael Early*

Sir *Richard Fleetwood*

Monk

Warren

Lieutenant Colonels.

Sir *Francis Butler*

Gibbs

Major *Hammond*

Captains.

Captains.

Atkyns
 Sydenham
 Finch
 Disney
 Fisher
 Cook
 Ward
 Dean
 Lucas
 Litcole
 Betts
 Spotswood
 Banbridge
 Willier

Lieutenants.

Long
 Norton
 Roe
 Pawlet
 Goodwin
 Liverfon
 Duddleston
 Pate
 Morgell
 Lestrange

Shipworth

Ankers

Billingfley

Castillion

Milner

Bradshaw

Walden

Lyons

Poulden

Smith

Ensigns.

Brown

Brereton

Bach

Fines

Wright

Davis

Touthwood

Addisse

Smith

Mahoone

Rife

Deudsworth

Musgrave

Pemicock

Dunsterfield

Elliar

Eiclast

<i>Eiclaß</i>	<i>Temingham</i>	
<i>Philips</i>	<i>Wither</i>	
<i>Heard</i>	<i>Cornets:</i>	
<i>Thomas</i>	<i>Lee</i>	
<i>Morgan</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>	
<i>Lewis</i>	<i>Quarter Masters.</i>	
<i>Godsclue</i>	<i>Lee</i>	
<i>Busby</i>	<i>Petty</i>	
<i>Gentlemen of Companies</i>	—	20
<i>Serjeants</i>	—	41
<i>Drums</i>	—	40
<i>Corporals</i>	—	63
<i>Cannoneers</i>	—	4
<i>Colcurs</i>	—	21
<i>Women, many of whom had long knives</i>		120
<i>Common Soldiers</i>	—	1500
<i>Ordnance, whereof five were of Brass</i>		6
<i>Carriages</i>	—	20
<i>Divers waggons and rich plunder.</i>		

Besides these, *Sir Ralph Done*, and the Reverend *Mr. Shurlock*, a chaplain to a regiment, were taken prisoners, and *Lieutenant Colonel Vane* was killed in the fight.

Besides the Church of *Nantwich*, already described, and the *School* before-mentioned, the other public buildings of the town are, the *Presbyterian*, *Anabaptist*, and *Quakers Meeting-Houses*,

Houses, the *Town-Hall*, and three *Hospitals*, or *Alms-Houses*. The first is in the *Hospital-Street*, and is a good decent building, to which appertains a convenient house for the minister. The second is in *Barker-Street*; it seems to be approaching to decay; and that sect of *Anabaptists*, which was formerly more numerous here, is at present much diminished, if not totally so, and the building now occupied as a conventicle, by the people called *Methodists*. The *Quakers Meeting*, in *Pillory-Street*, is a good building, and competently large, though there are but few of that persuasion either in the town or the adjacent country. The *Town-Hall*, with a sessions room over it, was erected in the year 1720, by his late Majesty, when Prince of Wales, who gave 600 l. for that purpose. Two other towns in this county owe the erection of their *Town-Halls* to his late Majesty's munificence, as *Earl of Chester*. Upon the end of our *Town-Hall* was placed his effigies, with the crest of the principality. In the year 1737, upon a market day, part of this fabric fell down, whereby nine or ten lives were lost, and many were terribly bruised and hurt; it was again rebuilt; and ^{some} years ago, while the justices were holding their sessions, a sudden crush, from what cause is at present unknown, so greatly alarmed the court,

court, that in the hurry and confusion of getting down, many people were much hurt thereby, expecting every moment the whole fabric to fall. These events have occasioned the holding of the quarter sessions to be removed from hence about fourteen years since.

At the end of the street leading to *London* is the *Hospital* (founded anno 1638, by Sir *Edmund Wright*, said to be four times *Lord Mayor* of *London*, and born here) for six poor old men, who have each a warm gown of grey cloth, faced with red, every alternate year, and a new shirt and a pair of shoes every year, a convenient apartment, a small garden, and an annual pension of four pounds. Whenever a vacancy happens in this *Hospital*, if a candidate offers of the name of *Wright*, he is to have the preference, provided his other qualifications are equal; which are, that he be a native, above the age of fifty, poor and unable to get his living by labour, of honest behaviour, and sober conversation, and lastly, that he be a member of the *Church* of *England*.

Another *Hospital* is at the end of the *Welch-Row*, and founded by Sir *Roger Wilbraham*, Knight, Master of Requests to King *James I.* anno 1613, for four poor men of the parish of *Nantwich*, and for two of the adjacent parish of *Acton*, clothed in the manner of the other, only their gowns faced with *blue*; each has a small apartment and garden, and 40 shillings per annum.

At the end of the *Beam-Street*, (so denominated from the numerous timber trees which formerly grew thereon converted into *beams*); at the end of this street, in the year 1767, was erected by *John Crewe*, of *Crewe*, *Esq*; a handsome and spacious *Hospital* of seven commodious apartments, with convenient gardens for so many pensioners, who each receive an annual salary of six pounds. This *Hospital* fronts the entrance of that extensive heath or common, formerly known by the name of the *Creach*, but more modernly by that of *Beam-Heath*, as before observed. It is a rich piece of land, lying principally in the township of *Alvandeston*, of about two miles in length, and a quarter of a mile broad, in some parts of it considerably more; it maintains great numbers of cattle all the summer season. On the nearer end, the bricks with which the town is supplied for buildings are made, and upon the further end, leading to *Middlewich*, is a fine race-course. This valuable tract of land was given to the inhabitants of *Nantwich* in general, in the 14th year of King *Edward I.* as the following deed evidences.

The Grant or Deed of *Beam-Heath* to the Inhabitants of *Nantwich*, in the 14th year of *Edward I.*

THIS agreement made between *Richard Alvasaston*, clerk, *William*, the son of *William*, of the same, *Thomas*, the son of *Cradoc*, of *Weston*,

Weston, Richard, the son of *Roger*, *Goodith*, his wife, *William*, the son of *Thomas Cottigreen*, and *Agnes*, his wife, of the one part; and between all the men of the *whole Community* of the village or town of *Wich-Malbank*, on the other part; being the 10th of April, in the year of Grace 1285, and so to last between the said parties *for ever*, viz. That the said *Richard*, *William*, *Thomas*, *Richard*, *Goodith*, *William* and *Agnes*, have granted, and by this present writing confirmed by themselves, for their heirs and assigns, to the said men of *Wich-Malbank*, and their heirs, that they have *for ever* free common of pasture for all and all manner of cattle, in any part whatsoever, to the wood and whole waste of the town of *Alvandeston* belonging, at all times of the year, except only the forty days between the feasts of *St. Michael* and *St. Martin*; so that neither the said *Richard*, *William*, &c. their heirs or assigns, shall ever inclose any of the said wood or waste, nor claim any approvement for themselves, their heirs or assigns; but the same *shall for ever lie in common*. Nevertheless, by virtue of the grant and agreement aforesaid, confirmed by this present writing, all the men aforesaid of the community of *Wich-Malbank*, do grant and covenant, for them, their heirs and assigns, to the said *Richard*, &c. and their heirs and assigns, that it shall be lawful for them to approve in such manner as shall seem to them most meet, without the interruption or contradiction of the said men of *Wich-Malbank*, a certain place of the said waste lying

within the division hereafter mentioned, viz from the ford under *Schalarn*, in the field which is called the *Brocfield*, near the *Sonstrest* following the *Knowl* on the one side of the crooked-brook to the *Seich* which is over-against *Marler*, and so ascending by the said *Seich* to the great *Oak*, and from thence directly to the *Redclough*, so divided by the bounds and meet there drawn, and thence following the *Redclough* from the same side to *Robutsbey*; so that the said men of *Wich-Malbank*, nor their heirs or assigns, shall have any common within the said place, while it shall be inclosed, nor ever shall or may claim the same. And because the parties aforesaid will that this agreement do stand ratified firm and inviolable, they have entered the same on the roll at *Chester*, called the *Doomsday-Book*; and for greater security either party hath put to their seals in the form of a cynograph; these witnesses being present: Sir *Reginald Grey*, then Justice of *Chester*, Sir *Richard a Massie*, Sir *Ralph a Vernon*, Sir *Richard a Sanbach*, *Thomas a Crew*, *Thomas a Perns*, *William Woodnot*, *Thomas*, of *Allstaunton*, *William Clerk*.

And here, perhaps, it may not be deemed improper to mention the celebrated field-close adjoining to this town, called the *Heating-House-Meadow*, the property of *Peter Walthal, Esq*; of

of *Wistaston*, which hath been long famous for relieving overworked, worn down, and disordered horses. From whatever cause its sanative quality proceeds, whether particularly from a medicinal virtue of any herbs growing therein, or from its lying near the saline springs, or from the great forwardness of its grass, is not known; but this is indisputable, that very salutary effects are derived from the use of it.

Before this historical narrative be concluded, it may not be amiss to obviate a popular mistake, long entertained by the more illiterate part of the town, respecting the poet *Milton*; for he marrying to his last wife *Elizabeth*, a daughter of — *Minshull, Esq*; of *Stoke*, three miles from hence, and some persons of the name of *Milton* being found here, hath occasioned a fond credulity among them, that this immortal bard was born here, and thinking to honour the town thereby, have proceeded so far as to name the street, and even the house where he dwelt. Let such be informed, that *London* justly claims the honour of his birth, where he was born on the 9th day of December 1608, in the morning, betwixt seven and eight o'clock, in *Bread-street*, where his father lived at the sign of the *Spread-Eagle*, being the coat of arms belonging to the family. His widow however, I apprehend, was
resident

resident here*; which circumstance might serve to occasion the fore-mentioned mistake; and I have been informed that a whole length picture of the *celebrated bard* was purchased in this town by one of the worthy family of the *Wilbraham's*, of *Towns-End*, then a student of *Brazen-Nose-College, Oxford*, and by him presented to the university. This picture might probably have been part of the household furniture of *Milton's widow*. To conclude the narrative. That observation made more than a century since, upon the state of *Nantwich*, may in a good measure be now applied; namely, that howsoever the inhabitants have had their advancement, sure I am (saith the author) there can hardly be found a town merely uplandish, as we term it, not enriched by any special trade and manufacture, nor traded to by water, can shew such a knot of wealthy and landed men in so small a compass. And let me add, the better sort of the inhabitants in general, are a humane and hospitable, a generous and polite set of people.

* Since this was written, my conjecture appears to be truly founded; she resided here the latter part of her life, and was buried on the 10th day of March, 1726, and her funeral sermon preached by Mr. *Isaac Kimber*, a dissenting minister, well known for his ingenious writings, and whole ministry she constantly attended.



P. S. By reason of the Author's distance from the Press, a few typographical errors have occurred ; the most material of which are noted in the table of errata, the rest, the judicious reader is desired to correct as he goes along.

E R R A T A.

Page 4, Line 8, for country read *county*.—P. 6, l. 5 r. *accruing*.—P. 8, l. 13, r. *Middle-Stych*.—P. 22, l. 19 r. *St. Nicholas*, wherever the word *St. Michael* occurs.—P. 24, l. 3, dele these words, *The Church as it now stands*.—P. 27, l. 16, r. *Ciceronian*.—P. 31, in the note at the bottom r. *Touchet*, and for Aldilley's r. *Aldithley's*.—P. 32, l. 20, r. *garb*.—P. 34 l. 3, r. *Wet-tenhall*.—P. 35, l. 13, r. *which*.—P. 38, l. 21, r. *Warren* and *Surry*.

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T H H A T A

Page 2. Line 8, for country read county.—P. 6. l. 2
7. remaining.—P. 8. l. 1. for the 2nd.—P. 22. l. 19
7. St. Michael, where St. Michael occurs.
—P. 24. l. 1. for the Church as it now
stands.—P. 25. l. 1. for in the
note at the bottom of the page, and for Aldley's r.
Widdowson.—P. 25. l. 2. for 1. 2. r. 1. 2. Widdowson.
—P. 25. l. 3. for 1. 2. r. 1. 2. Widdowson.
and 2. 3. r. 1. 2. Widdowson.



